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Bild und Bau der Schweizeralpen. Von Dr. Karl Schmidt. Emil Birkhäuser, Basel, 1907.

"Structure and Picture" is the meaning of the title, though it should properly be "Pictures" of the Swiss Alps. The geological map, the diagrams and sections and the photographic views are exceedingly abundant and of rare excellence. But we miss a general picture in words, a clear, logical, and sufficiently concise *résumé* of the enormous mass of valuable detail crowded into the text of 91 pages. Even the concluding section, treating in part of the geological history, is encumbered by the author's tendency to display knowledge of detail. The impression created by the whole is that of a vast agglomeration of valuable trees so placed that they cannot afford the general view of a forest.

We gather that the problem presented by the structure (orographic, physical as far as lithology is concerned, and chemical) of the Swiss Alps, after more than a century of study distinguished for laboriousness, is still without a definite solution. This redounds to the credit of the students since every step forward has only suggested new duties. Every period of research has led its representatives to the conclusion that their results were only the rounds of a ladder on which their successors had to stand for climbing further. It also redounds to the credit of the author that, while possessing apparently a thorough knowledge of the field, he cautiously does not dwell upon results that are not obvious but places them in the light of suggestions and interrogation-points. It will be difficult for the geologist, accustomed to work in other less complex fields, to extricate himself from the maze of minute detail which Dr. Schmidt appears to master. Happily the sections, diagrams and the very carefully executed map will enable him to understand what in the text is sometimes confused through an accumulation of detail. Dr. Schmidt does not limit himself to the Swiss Alps; he draws neighbouring areas into the circle of his discussions and occasionally turns from Switzerland to the coasts of Brittany and to central Germany in a manner disagreeable to the reader who has followed or tried to follow a thread of interesting statements towards a clear result.

As we have said, no clear picture of the genesis, not even of the present construction of the Swiss Alps, can be obtained from the text. But, with the aid of the numerous handsome illustrations, a sort of satisfactory impression may be gathered. Inverse to the hitherto accepted method of illustrating the text the new system of illustrating the pictures by the text is followed and, it must be said, with excellent results, as the text itself would be largely unintelligible without the plates.

We dimly discern that "once upon a time" the surface of what is now Switzerland was liquid, which is not a new fact. Thereupon, we are informed that here and there, now and then, forces of subterraneous origin propelled above that liquid envelope some of the submarine strata and that "magma" occasionally came to the surface also. Then in the course of time again that solid surface grew in lateral expansion and formed a sort of plateau from central Germany clear over Switzerland to Italy. Then, somehow or other, that plateau was rent and at some period, not very clearly defined by the author, subterraneous forces began to variegate the physiognomy of the surface. About the same time or later "tangential" impulses (the point of departure of which we are not told) added their folding impetus further to this disfiguring the placid countenance of central Europe and, finally, a series of gradual dislocations and upheavals conspired to give the Alps their present very original, facial aspect. All this is not very

clearly stated, but may be dug out of the mounds of fact placed by the author at the disposal of the student, leaving it to the latter to dig. Very little importance is placed by the author on glacial action. Not that he would disregard it, but his predilection is manifestly in favour of other forces. He, and perhaps justly, attributes to glacial and other erosions only a modifying, not a revolutionary, influence on the surface.

Very important are the suggestions which the author makes in regard to mineralogical changes in the rocks. He intimates that the metamorphosis of rocks has not only been going on in the past, producing in course of time altered mineralogical combinations, but that, slowly and imperceptibly, it continues to-day. There is a constant activity going on in the Alpine masses, rigid and immovable as they appear; displacements; depletions and accumulations elsewhere. The force of compression varies, and thus slowly modifies the chemical composition of the rock by alternate increase and decrease of temperature, disintegrating certain compounds and slowly forming new ones, in the course of long periods of time. A. F. B.

Navigating the Air. By the Aero Club of America. xli and 259 pp., and Many Photographs and Diagrams. Doubleday, Page & Co., New York, 1907.

This is a scientific statement of the progress of aeronautical science up to the year 1907. Such a book as this was needed. It has gathered together the reports of aeronautical experiments; tells of years of investigation and patient effort, describes the inventions that have come from the thought and work of many men, and gives a panoramic history of aeronautics in this country and in Europe. Some twenty different writers, each an expert in the matters which he discusses, have contributed to make this volume. Among the authors are the Wright Brothers, who seem to have demonstrated that air navigation may be placed on a practical basis; Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, Lieut. Frank P. Lahm, who won the First Annual Aeronautic Cup race for the Aero Club of America; Prof. W. H. Pickering, Mr. Israel Ludlow, Prof. A. Lawrence Rotch, Oliver L. Fassig, Prof. David Todd, and others. The book is essential to all who desire to be well-informed concerning the progress of aeronautics. So much of it is non-technical, that the volume will interest the general reader.

Burma.—A Handbook of Practical Information. By Sir J. George Scott. x and 520 pp., Map, 64 Illustrations from half-tones, Appendices, Bibliography, and Index. Alexander Moring, Ltd., London, 1906. (Price, 10s. 6d.)

Part I treats of the geography, fauna, flora, geology, and races of Burma; Part II of its government, education, and history; Part III of its industries, trade, transportation, currency, weights and measures; Part IV, of its archæology, architecture, art, and music; Part V of its religion (Buddhism); Part VI of its language and literature; and Part VII gives hints to visitors. In the appendices are more detailed descriptions of the political divisions, of Upper and Lower Burma, and the Shan States, lists of the commoner fauna, flora, metals, minerals and gems, and a bibliography. The book is not large but neither is it a mere compendium. It is written in narrative style and is thoroughly readable. The author's competency as an authority and writer on Burma has long been recognized and the book will fill the need for a work that is not bulky, but contains the essential facts about the country and its peoples.